



1st Medical Brigade History



The mission of the 1st Medical Brigade “Silver Knights” is to provide command and control, administrative assistance, and technical supervision of assigned and attached medical units, while providing combat health support to supported forces. Be ready to deploy medical support packages on short notice.

The 1st Medical Brigade is the oldest color-bearing medical unit and most diverse Medical Brigade in the United States Army today. It provides command and control to over 3,000 Soldiers located throughout six installations and at various deployment areas and is the largest, most diverse Medical Brigade in the Army. This deployable Brigade, under III Corps, supports the Soldiers and their Families. 1st Medical Brigade is currently serves command and control of five Combat Support Hospitals on five installations.

An effort to designate an official birth date for the corps backfired. A committee recommended 11 March 1864, the date of the law that established the Ambulance Corps. The surgeon general's chief historian agreed, and Colonel Aabel submitted it for approval. However, Maj. Gen. James P. Cooney, the deputy surgeon general, did not agree. Cooney argued that there was not an unbroken continuity between the Civil War Ambulance Corps and the World War I Sanitary Corps, and he convinced the surgeon general to use the formation of the Sanitary Corps as the birth date. Cooney picked 18 May 1917, the date of the emergency war powers legislation that gave President Wilson the authority for mobilization, rather than the more precise 30 June 1917 date of the general orders that established the Sanitary Corps.

The 1st Medical Group was organized in France in 1917 as the 1st Sanitary Train from units which had been deployed along the Mexican border. It was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division, the first American Unit committed to offensive operations in World War I. The unit's Organization Day commemorates the Battle of Cantigny on 28 May 1918. During World War I, the unit evacuated and treated over 20,000 casualties, to include the first Americans wounded in action, the first wounded Germans captured by the Americans, and the first casualties resulting from a German gas attack against American troops. Conditions in France were rough, and medics of the 1st Sanitary Train often had to carry litter patients over 1,000 meters through trenches filled knee-deep with mud and water.

In 1919, the 1st Sanitary Train returned to the United States, and in 1921 was reorganized as the 1st Medical Regiment and stationed at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania where it served as the demonstration unit for the Medical Field Service School. In 1937, elements of the Regiment deployed to Kentucky, in support of disaster relief following a devastating flood. In 1939, the Regiment provided medical support for participants in the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg.

In 1943, the Regiment's headquarters was redesignated as the 1st Medical Group. In 1944, the Group entered the European Theater of Operations where it provided medical support to the



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Ninth U.S. Army. In 1945, following redeployment the Group was inactivated at Fort Benning, Georgia.

In 1950, the Group was reactivated in Frankfurt, Germany, providing hospitalization, evacuation, dental, and veterinary services to allied personnel. In 1954, the group moved to Verdun, France, and was inactivated in 1962.

The Army shrank from a Korean War peak of over 1.5 million to under 860,000 by 1961. This was partly accomplished through a reduction in force (RIF) as the Eisenhower administration forced down the strength of the Army by involuntarily separating soldiers from active duty. The reductions were painful, but the number remaining on active duty was considerably more than after World War II due to the continuing Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In 1968, the Group's latest activation occurred at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where it was attached to the Medical Field Service School with the mission of training newly activated medical units prior to deployment to the Republic of Vietnam. In 1975, the Group deployed to Guam to support Operation New Life, a large scale support project for Southeast Asian refugees. In 1977, the Group moved to Fort Hood, Texas, where it has been proudly serving III Corps as the largest Medical Brigade in the Army.

In October of 1990, HHD, 1st Medical Group, deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The 1st Medical Group was successful in their mission and dedicated to the service and support provided.

On 6 June 2000, the 1st Medical Group was redesignated the 1st Medical Brigade. The Brigade had operational control over 9 separate units in 4 different states. Three of these were located at Fort Hood while the remaining units were located at Fort Carson, Colorado; Fort Sam Houston, Texas; Fort Bliss, Texas; Fort Riley, Kansas; and Fort Polk Louisiana. The 1st Medical Brigade also supported Darnall Army Community Hospital and was the chief proponent for sponsoring the Expert Field Medical Badge competition at Fort Hood.

The 31st Combat Support Hospital relocated from Germany to Fort Bliss, Texas on 15 June 1992 and on 17 August 1992 was redesignated as the 131st Field Hospital (Caretaker Status) and assigned to the 1st Medical Group, Fort Hood, Texas. The 131st Field Hospital structured under the caretaker concept. On 18 October 1995, Task Force 131 deployed 32 beds of the hospital for the United Nations Mission in Haiti. During the deployment, the 131st Hospital received orders re-designating it once more as the 31st Combat Support Hospital as of 16 February 1996. The hospital returned to Fort Bliss, Texas on 16 March 1996.



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The 507th Medical Company, an element of the 13th COSCOM, completed the fielding of its UH-60As in November of 1997. The unit continued to perform lifesaving missions, but had better assets with which to do that vital job. The 82nd Medical Company at Fort Riley, Kansas, began its fielding of the UN-60A in FY99. The completion of the 82nd Medical Company's fielding resulted in the removal of the UH-1 from the III Corps active-duty inventory. Many were sad to see the old workhorse leave but the "sound of freedom" continues with III Corps leading the way with more modern and lethal helicopters.

Another Combat Support Hospital of the 1st Medical Brigade; the US Army's 21st Combat Support Hospital (CSH) is an Active Component 248-bed hospital from Fort Hood, TX that provides Combat Health Support for sick and injured soldiers on the modern battlefield. The 21st CSH includes over 500 soldiers with vehicles and equipment worth over \$10 million. The 21st CSH deployed to Kuwait in March 03 and conducted convoy operations to hospital sites in Northern Iraq. It currently operates two hospitals in Iraq, "Bear North" and "Bear South." The names are derived from the unit mascot; the Black Bear. I was assigned as the Commander of the 21st Combat Support Hospital from Jun 01 to Jun 03.

In March of 2003, the 1st Medical Brigade deployed to Kuwait and then onward to Tikrit, Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and redeployed in September of 2003.

In November of 2003, the 31st Combat Support Hospital received Deployment Orders in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 2 and underwent a massive reorganization under the Medical Reengineering Initiative, also commonly known as MRI. In order to complete the mission given to them, the hospital was staffed with Soldiers from various military hospitals around the United States. On 7 January 2004, the Soldiers of the 31st Combat Support Hospital deployed to Balad and Baghdad, Iraq. The 31st Combat Support Hospital played a major role in ensuring that those deployed returned safely to their families. Elements of the unit returned to Fort Bliss between 29 September 2004 and 8 January 2005. It was for this period that the unit was awarded meritorious unit citation as its second unit award.

In October 2005 the 224th Preventive Medicine Detachment and 21st Combat Support Hospital were one of the first to respond assigned to the 1st Medical Brigade deployed to New Orleans, LA to provide emergency Level III health care service and support with the Joint Task Force Katrina/Rita Hurricane Relief Effort operations. The units returned to Fort Hood on 14 November 2005. The 21st Combat Support Hospital took over operations being conducted by the 14th Combat Support Hospital out of Fort Benning, Georgia. The mission of the Hospital became essential because Charity Hospital, which had served the impoverished of New Orleans for more than 70 years prior to the storm, was damaged beyond repair by Hurricane Katrina. The 21st Combat Support Hospital took over the responsibility of providing emergency care to those previously served by Charity Hospital. The orders to deploy came at a time when the 21st Combat Support Hospital was already gearing up to go into a field environment. During the



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21st's deployment to New Orleans, the unit was joined by more than 100 Reservists and Active component Soldiers who were part of the Professional Filler System (PROFIS).

The 21st Combat Support Hospital, cased its colors in April 2006 as it prepared to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Soldiers of the 21st Combat Support Hospital were deploying to provide detainee healthcare in the Iraqi Theater of Operation as part of Task Force 21. Task Force 21 Medical was made up of medical professionals and soldiers from 34 installations from across the Army.

Along with Romanian Healthcare providers, Task Force 21 was responsible for detainee care at Camp Cropper and Camp Bucca Theater Internment Facilities. They provided primary care through Level III and IV hospitalization to detainees and Coalition forces, and were responsible for Level I healthcare at Camp Ashraf. The Task Force also provided Level II healthcare at Fort Suse before it closed in September 2006. The Task Force helped transition operations from Abu Ghraib to Camp Cropper and coped with the expansion of Camp Bucca from a starting detainee population of 8,500 to a camp capable of holding 15,000. The 21st Combat Support Hospital returned from the deployment in April 2007.

Alerted in October 2006 for its second deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 31st CSH conducted a series of training events to incorporate its Professional Filler Personnel (PROFIS), cumulating with its Mission Rehearsal Exercise at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. The 31st CSH landed in Kuwait on 27 March 2007 and moved into Iraq on 6 April where it relieved the 21st Combat Support Hospital.

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On 7 November 2005 the 1st Medical Brigade again deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and redeployment on 4 October 2006.

The 1st Medical Brigade unfurled its colors during a transfer of authority ceremony at Al Faw Palace, Camp Victory, Iraq, on June 29, 2009. The brigade under the command of COL Robert Tenhet transferred authority from the 44th Medical Command, Fort Bragg, N.C. During its one-year deployment, Task Force 1st Medical Brigade provided medical, surgical, in-patient care, evacuation, preventive medical, dental, veterinary, optical, blood and medical logistics support to all coalition forces. In addition, the unit will continue to enhance partnerships with Iraqi health care professionals throughout the Iraq Theater of operations, in order to facilitate long-term sustainable Iraqi medical care delivery.



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The 21st Combat Support Hospital deployed the first week of January 2010, sending hundreds of medical specialists to three locations in Iraq. Leading the 21st are Col. Barbara Holcomb and Command Sgt. Maj. Gerald Ecker. Their soldiers range from nurses to X-Ray technicians to medics to patient specialists who can take care of any health care issue that arises in the units in their areas of operations. This is the third deployment for the 21st since 2003.

The 1st Medical Brigade returned to Fort Hood May 2010 marking the redeployment of the brigade headquarters from an 11-month deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn. They were the medical brigade, task force headquarters for Multi-National Corps – Iraq, which became U.S. Forces – Iraq at the beginning of 2010. The brigade provided command and control and directed health service-support operations in theater. During their tour of duty, the Silver Knights operated at the Victory Base Complex surrounding the Baghdad International Airport. The Silver Knights accounted for a 98 percent survival rate of trauma casualties that was aided by 85 percent of trauma patients being medically evacuated by air for surgery within one hour – which is known as the ‘Golden Hour.’ The brigade also conducted more than 1,200 general and orthopedic surgeries and admitted more than 2,470 patients to level-three medical treatment facilities.

As part of the transformation of the U.S. Army to the modular force structure, the 13th Corps Support Command was reorganized and redesignated as the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary). The 1st Medical Brigade remained assigned to this Headquarter until September of 2010 when falling directly under III Corps, Fort Hood as a Separate.

The 14th Field Hospital (subsequently redesignated as the 14th Combat Support Hospital) was assigned to the 44th Medical Command, XVIII Corps, based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina has now been reassigned to the 1st Medical Brigade, Fort Hood as of January 2011.

Since the beginning of the Global War on Terror not a day has passed where Soldier from the 1st Medical Brigade fell in harms way. The Brigade maintains one of the highest Operational Tempos for deployment and redeployment in the Army. The Brigade while supporting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan simultaneously remains ready for missions stateside.